

Gravel After Wildwood Funding

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Senator Mike Gravel (Democrat — Alaska) has embarked on what he calls "an all-out effort" to secure U. S. Department of Agriculture funding for the Wildwood "controlled-environment" agriculture experiment in rapid food production.

The Senator recently arranged a meeting between himself, the Chairman of the Senate Agriculture Committee, Herman Talmadge (D. — Ga.), USDA officers of the Research Service, and Alex Shadura of the Kenai Native Association, Inc.

Following that meeting, Senator Gravel said that Senator Talmadge "is quite interested in the project." Senator Gravel indicated that he will also be in touch with Senator Gale McGee (D. — Wyo.), ranking Democrat on the Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture.

Senator Gravel said he will push for a "line item appropriation" of \$1.6 million, to be earmarked solely for the Kenai Native Association project at the old Wildwood Air Force base. Initial funding from the Federal Office of Economic opportunity, used to get the project underway, runs out on June 30, the end of the current fiscal year.

Crucial to the crop experiment were several large electrical generators that the Air Force had at the facility. Senator Gravel persuaded the Air Force to leave the generators behind as a donation to the experiment and the people of Kenai.

Final transfer of the entire facility to the Native Association was officially completed several months ago.

"I visited the facilities on April 16," the senator said, "and I was immediately impressed by the potential of the project. It can revolutionize food production and consumption in even the most remote villages in Alaska. It could mean fresh vegetables and fruits year round, and at lowered cost."

The Alaska Democrat commended the Native Association for its "example of leadership, ingenuity, and willingness to work hard for the benefit of its own people."

Both Senator Gravel and Alex Shadura, project director for the Native Association, have stressed

the job opportunities that will follow from the project. Almost 200 people eventually may be hired from the Kenai Peninsula, if the funds are appropriated.